

Home Study Report

This home study was completed by The Department of Social Services solely for use in domestic foster care placement and/or adoption by and for State licensed/authorized agencies in the United States unless otherwise specified.

Name of Family: James and Mary Nelson		
Address: 1111 Elm Street		
City: Los Angeles	State: CA	ZIP Code: 95834 - 4355
Home Phone: 614 567 9538	Cell Phone: 614 569 3397	

APPLICATION DISPOSITION

Licensed for foster care on: 5/24/2005
 Approved for adoption on: 5/24/2005

The Applicants have applied to accept placement of a male or female child between the ages of 5 to 10 years old.
 The Applicants are not open to placement of a sibling group.
 The Applicants are primarily interested in becoming a Resource Family.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

James Nelson		Mary Nelson	
Date of Birth:	11/12/1962	Date of Birth:	03/07/1965
Birthplace:	Oakland, California	Birthplace:	Los Angeles, California
Gender:	Male	Gender:	Female
Religion:	Catholic	Religion:	Protestant
Occupation:	Advertising Sales Representative	Occupation:	Homemaker
Language(s):	English	Language(s):	English
Education:	High School	Education:	High School
Height:	5'11	Height:	5'7"
Weight:	205	Weight:	145
Hair:	Brown	Hair:	Brown
Eyes:	Hazel	Eyes:	Brown
Date of health questionnaire/report:	4/28/2005	Date of health questionnaire/report:	4/19/2005
TB test results:	Negative	TB test results:	Negative

MARITAL INFORMATION

Date of Marriage: 06/12/1989	Marriage Verification: On File
Place of Marriage: Los Angeles, California	

DATES OF CONTACT

Date	Individual/Couple	Location
2/22/2005	Joint interview with Mr. & Mrs. Nelson	Nelson home
2/28/2005	Individual interview with James Nelson	Nelson home
3/4/2005	Individual interview with Mary Nelson	Nelson home
3/11/2005	Interviews with Eric & Michael Nelson	Nelson home
3/11/2005	Joint interview with Mr. & Mrs. Nelson	Nelson home

MOTIVATION

The Nelsons report that they have a very stable and loving home life and thoroughly enjoyed raising their two sons, Eric and Michael. They are unable to have any more children as Mrs. Nelson was advised to have a tubal ligation for medical reasons after giving birth to Michael. They believe they have much to offer another child at this stage in their life. They would love to provide a home for a child whether it be temporary or permanent. They are prepared to help a child reunite with their birth family or become a permanent member of their own family through adoption.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

The Nelsons moved into their two story, two bath, four bedroom home shortly after their marriage in 1990. The house is situated in a quiet residential neighborhood in the city of Los Angeles. The house is well maintained with a spacious back yard with a fenced-in swimming pool. It is located in close proximity to both public and private schools and to such necessities as grocery stores, health care facilities, and large shopping centers. Parks, beaches, theaters, and a wide variety of entertainment/recreational options are also within easy driving distance from the home. At present the boys each have their own room and there is a fourth bedroom which would be used for their new child.

The interior and exterior of the home was inspected for health and safety hazards. The inspection was completed on 02/25/2005.

FAMILY

Applicant #1: James Nelson

Jim presents himself in an informal and outgoing manner. He is very engaging and easy to speak with. He is clearly goal oriented when it comes to his career and loves to talk about "business". Jim has worked in advertising sales for the past 12 years. He enjoys his work even though it is very stressful and competitive at times. Jim enjoys all spectator sports although until recently joining a health club, he did not participate in many physical activities. He likes to fish and go camping with his family and participates in his children's activities as much as possible.

Jim was born and raised in Oakland, California and was the second of three boys born to his parents Cliff and Margaret Nelson. Jim's father was a policeman and his mother was a stay-at-home mom. His parents were practicing Catholics and Jim attended Catholic grammar and high school. Shortly after graduation from high school, Jim's family moved to Los Angeles in order for his father to accept a position as Assistant Chief of Police for the Los Angeles County Police Department. After what he described as an unsuccessful semester at community college in Los Angeles and work experience at a fast food restaurant, Jim joined the Marine Corps for a four year tour of duty as an embassy guard in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and Berlin, Germany. Upon being honorably discharged, Jim moved back with his parents and began his career in sales advertising. At age 24 he met and married his first wife, Betsy Miller. The marriage only lasted a year and the couple divorced in 1984. There were no children from this union. Jim met Mary in 1988 and they were married in 1989.

Jim's parents currently live approximately 30 miles away in Riverside, California. Both are retired, in good health and maintain active lifestyles. They stay in close contact with Jim, Mary and the boys and visit once or twice a month. They often come to see Michael and Eric play soccer. Cliff is retired from the Los Angeles Police Department and Margaret from the Los Angeles Unified School District where she was an elementary school teacher. Jim is the middle of three children. Jim's older brother, Bill, is in law enforcement. He is married and also lives in Riverside with his wife and three daughters. Bill and Jim stay in close contact and the two families get together every month or so. Greg, Jim's younger brother works in sales. He lives 90 miles away in San Diego with his wife and one son. Jim keeps in close touch with Greg but because of distance does not get to see Greg and his family as often as he sees Bill.

Applicant #2: Mary Nelson

Mary presents in a soft spoken, friendly and engaging manner. She enjoys cooking and is quite skilled in the art. When not focusing on her family, her creative side surfaces. Mary is artistic and displays her abilities by making jewelry, pottery, flower arrangements and wreaths. She likes to garden and the family's home reflects her interest. Overall, being a homemaker is what interests Mary most; raising two children and running a home keeps her very busy.

Mary was born and raised in Los Angeles and was the youngest of three children. Her parents, Jim King and Faye Duncan, were divorced when Mary was five years old. After the divorce, Mary and her two older brothers, Sam and Ted, continued to live with their mother and had weekly visitation with their father. Mary's father was a pharmacist and her mother for the most part was a stay-at-home mom except for the brief period between her divorce and remarriage when she worked as a receptionist for a dentist. Mary's father remarried in 1979 to Kathy Johnson and her mother remarried in 1980 to Harold Duncan. Upon graduation from high school, Mary wanted to travel and got a job with United Airlines as a flight attendant. She was working for United Airlines when she met Jim. Since her marriage to Jim in 1989, Mary has been a homemaker.

Mary's parents Jim King and Faye Duncan remain married to their second spouses and live a retired lifestyle. Mary's father's home is about 20 miles away in Santa Ana and her mother lives about 10 miles away in Glendale. Mary stays in close touch with both parents and the relationship between both parents and their spouses is cordial. Both couples often attend the boys' soccer games, family parties and other events. On holidays and other special occasions Jim and Mary and the boys celebrate with each of the families separately, which they report as "just the way it has always been." Both couples often attend the boys' soccer games and special Nelson family events without any issues.

Mary's oldest brother Sam lives in San Diego. He is single and works for Wal Mart. Ted, her youngest brother lives in Tucson, Arizona. He is in the Air Force and currently single. Mary indicated that she sees Ted more frequently than Sam even though Ted lives in another state. Ted sometimes comes to stay with Mary and Jim when he is on leave from the Air Force. Mary has phone contact with Sam and Ted two or three times a month.

Applicants' Sons and Daughters

The Nelson's have two sons, Eric and Michael. At 14 years of age, Eric presents as a polite, outgoing, confident young man with a good sense of humor. He is very involved in school, both in athletics and academics. Eric gets good grades and reports that school comes easily to him. He wants to go to college and is focused on getting into UCLA. He likes computers and reportedly has to be torn away from his PC. He loves to play soccer and has been playing most of his life. Eric reports that he has a number of friends in the neighborhood who often come over to swim, listen to CD's and kind of "hang out." On occasion they have sleepovers both here and at a friend's home. He reports that his parents are pretty strict about following up on calls to his friend's homes to be sure there will be adult supervision and he can only stay with families his parents know.

Michael is 13 years old and presents as a polite, somewhat reserved, seemingly content young man. He is healthy and has never had any serious medical problems although he is susceptible to colds and allergies. Michael does well in school but admits it takes more effort on his part than it does for his brother. Michael enjoys playing soccer and playfully indicated that he is a better player than his brother. Michael also enjoys watching TV and hanging out with his brother and other friends. He likes being outdoors and loves computer games. Michael reports that he has a few friends, but mostly hangs out with Eric and his friends.

Other children living or frequently in the home

There are no other children living in the home.

Other adults residing or frequently in the home

There are no other adults living or frequently in the home.

Family Lifestyle

Jim and Mary lead a busy and traditional lifestyle. Mary is primarily responsible for tasks inside the home and Jim the outside. All family members have their assigned responsibilities with regard to keeping the household running. They all have busy schedules during the week with school, work, appointments, and activities. The family routinely eats dinner together around the dining room table. The family diet is basically a well balanced traditional American one although Mary tries to stay away from overly rich or high fat foods. Neither Jim or Mary smoke. Alcohol consumption is limited to one or two glasses of wine with the evening meal. Children in the family are not allowed to drink alcohol until they are 21.

While Jim was raised Catholic and Mary was raised Protestant (Methodist), neither attend church on a regular basis. When they do attend church services on occasions such as Easter or Christmas, they usually go to a Catholic service with the boys. This is truly a "soccer family". If it's not school and work then it is soccer that keeps them busy. They travel with their league and attend all games. They have developed an extended family with the other soccer families. When they can, the family enjoys outdoor activities such as camping, fishing, and hiking. They also enjoy renting movies and going to see professional soccer, hockey, and basketball games.

Previous adoptions or foster care experience

The Nelsons have no previous adoption or foster care experience.

FINANCES

Combined annual gross earned income: \$68,000
Sources of additional income: None

CRIMINAL/CHILD ABUSE RECORD

The required criminal record and Child Abuse Index checks were completed for James Nelson and Mary Nelson.

Department of Justice: James and Mary have no history of criminal arrests or convictions.

Child Abuse Index Check: Neither James nor Mary had entries on the Child Abuse Index.

Other findings: None

EMERGENCY CARE PLAN

Mary's sister Helen and her husband Larry have been identified as the individuals who will provide long term care in the event of an incapacitating illness or death. Helen and Larry are close to Jim and Mary and have strong relationships with Eric and Michael. They are very supportive of the adoption and are committed to being responsible in the future for this child as well.

CONTACT WITH FAMILY OF ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Jim and Mary understand and are committed to concurrent planning. They are clear that their first response will be to help in any way they can with reunification. They are also clear that should they adopt, they would like to enter into a post finalization contact agreement so that their adopted child will be able to retain ties with his/her birth family and other significant people from their past.

REFERENCES

All references were completed and received.

FAMILY PREPARATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Jim and Mary participated in the agency's foster/adoptive parent training program during February and March. While they initially applied with adoption in mind they quickly became committed to becoming a resource family once they learned about concurrent planning. They were active participants and are gaining a good understanding of their role as a concurrent planning resource family and the challenges they will face. They believe this program has helped prepare them for their new parenting experience. They have made contact with the local foster parent support group and plan on staying connected after they have received a child.

LEGAL/FINANCIAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

James Nelson and Mary Nelson have been provided with information concerning the different roles, responsibilities, legal and financial rights and benefits of relative/fictive kin caregivers, foster parents, legal guardians and adoptive parents. Also, should they file a petition to adopt, James Nelson and Mary Nelson understand that they will be accepting full legal and financial parental responsibility for their adopted child(ren) once an adoption is finalized.

The agency's grievance review hearing procedures were explained to the Applicants.

PSYCHOSOCIAL INVENTORY RESULTS

NOTE: Below is a list of the psychosocial factors found on the SAFE Psychosocial Inventory. Using the Psychosocial Inventory, each factor was considered and rated several times by the social worker during the course of this home study. The ratings below represent the final ratings. The ratings are defined as follows: 1 = an exceptional strength, 2 = a strength, 3 = an issue of concern, 4 = a major issue of concern and 5 = very serious problem. The OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION ratings reflect the degree to which all issues of concern identified in the section were either resolved, mitigated or the prognosis for change.

#1	#2	HISTORY	#1	#2	EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
2	2	Childhood Family Adaptability	2	2	Extended Family Cohesion
2	2	Childhood Family Cohesion	2	2	Extended Family Adaptability
3	4	Childhood History of Deprivation/Trauma	2	2	Relationship with own Extended Family
2	3	Childhood History of Victimization	2	2	Relationship with Spouse's/Partner's Family
2	2	Adult History of Victimization/Trauma	2	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION
2	2	History of Child Abuse/Neglect			
4	3	History of Alcohol/Drug Use			PHYSICAL/SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
2	2	History of Crime/Arrest/Allegations/Violence		2	Cleanliness/Orderliness/Maintenance
2	4	Psychiatric History		2	Safety
3	2	Occupational History		2	Furnishings
4	2	Marriage/Domestic Partner History		2	Play Area/Equipment/Clothing
3	3	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION		2	Finances
				2	Support System
#1	#2	PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS		2	Household Pets
2	2	Communication		2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION
1	2	Commitment and Responsibility			
2	1	Problem Solving	#1	#2	GENERAL PARENTING
1	2	Interpersonal Relations	2	2	Child Development
3	2	Health and Physical Stamina	2	1	Parenting Style
2	1	Self-esteem	2	2	Disciplinary Methods
2	1	Acceptance of Differences	2	2	Child Supervision
2	2	Coping Skills	2	2	Learning Experiences
2	2	Impulse Control	2	2	Parental Role
2	2	Mood	2	2	Child Interactions
2	2	Anger Management and Resolution	2	2	Communication with Child
2	2	Judgment	2	2	Basic Care
2	2	Adaptability	2	2	Child's Play
2	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION	2	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION
		MARITAL/DOMESTIC PARTNER RELATIONSHIP	#1	#2	SPECIALIZED PARENTING
	2	Conflict Resolution	2	2	Expectations
	1	Emotional Support	2	2	Effects of Abuse/Neglect
	2	Attitude toward Spouse/Partner	2	2	Effects of Sexual Abuse
	1	Communication between Couple	2	2	Effects of Separation and Loss
	2	Balance of Power	2	2	Structure
	2	Stability of the Marriage or Partnership	2	2	Therapeutic/Educational Resources
	2	Sexual Compatibility	2	2	Birth Sibling Relationships
	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION	2	2	Child Background Information
			2	2	Birth Parent Issues
			2	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION
		SONS/DAUGHTERS/OTHERS RESIDING OR FREQUENTLY IN HOME	#1	#2	ADOPTION ISSUES
	2	Minor Sons and Daughters	3	3	Infertility
	2	Minors Residing or Frequently in the Home	2	2	Telling Child about Adoption
	N/A	Adult Sons and Daughters	2	2	Openness in Adoption
	N/A	Adults Residing or Frequently in the Home	2	2	Adoptive Parent Status
	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION	2	2	OVERALL EVALUATION OF SECTION

PSYCHOSOCIAL EVALUATION REPORT

HISTORY

MARY NELSON

Despite the fact that Mary's parents divorced when she was five years old, her description of her childhood family contained all the elements of healthy family cohesion and adaptability. After the divorce, Mary and her two older brothers lived with their mother but continued to have consistent, meaningful contact with their father. Mary portrayed her relationships with her parents, stepparents, siblings and extended family in very positive terms.

After giving careful consideration to all of the historical psychosocial factors, five historical issues of concern were identified and addressed with Mary. They were the divorce of her parents, the death of her maternal grandparents, Mary's pattern of moderate daily alcohol consumption, an incident of sexual molestation and an episode of postpartum depression after Michael's birth. The relationship between these issues, if any, and the degree to which these concerns were resolved was carefully analyzed. In this worker's judgment these were five unrelated events and all but one, Mary's pattern of daily moderate drinking, has been resolved. The following paragraphs contain a discussion that provides the basis for each of these determinations.

Mary reported that while the divorce of her parents was a shock at the time, her sadness and confusion was lessened by the sensitive and responsible way her parents managed the situation. She does not remember any fighting or conflict between her parents and both her mother and father stayed supportive and involved with all three of their children throughout the process. Mary said her sadness and confusion lessened further with the subsequent stability of the new marriages and congenial relationships between her parents and their second spouses. She grew to love her stepparents and believes they paced their relationship with all three children in a sensitive and caring manner. There are no indicators to suggest the divorce of her parents has adversely impacted Mary's childhood development or adult functioning.

Mary reported that both of her maternal grandparents died of natural causes during her childhood. Her maternal grandfather passed away when Mary was 6 years old. She does not have vivid memories of him but does remember her mother being very upset at the time of his death. She does have fond memories of her grandmother who died when Mary was 12 years old. This was her first experience of losing someone that she was close to. She remembers the funeral and talked about how that helped her deal with the loss. Mary from all accounts, was able to effectively grieve this loss in a healthy manner.

Mary reported that she enjoys drinking one or two glasses of wine with dinner on a daily basis. Mary said that while her parents never drank alcohol to excess, they always had wine with meals. She said that like her parents, this is something she has done for all of her adult life. Mary has no history of excessive drinking and never exceeds two glasses of wine at parties or social engagements. Even though Mary indicated a willingness to discontinue her moderate daily drinking if it jeopardized a placement, she has not discontinued this drinking pattern and therefore this issue is considered unresolved. In this worker's judgment, Mary's historical and current alcohol consumption in and of itself is not problematic. She has no familial predisposition for alcoholism and no history of excessive drinking. It remains as an issue of concern primarily because placement in a home where alcohol is consumed is contraindicated for some children.

The incident of childhood victimization occurred when Mary was 13 years old. While attending a summer camp, a counselor sexually assaulted her by fondling her breast under the guise of checking her for sunburn. Mary reported the incident to the camp manager. The incident was investigated by the police, the counselor was fired and Mary received appropriate support from her family and camp staff. Her parents also arranged for Mary to see a psychologist who was very instrumental in helping her sort out her feelings concerning the incident. While this incident was traumatic there are several indicators that suggest that the trauma was managed in a healthy and effective manner. The impact of the abuse was mitigated by the fact that it was an isolated event, a non-familial perpetrator, no excessive force was used and there was no pressure to keep it a secret. Also, issues concerning Mary's feelings of guilt for being vulnerable to assault were dealt with by the psychologist. Mary received appropriate support from her family. There was nothing found to indicate the trauma was having a detrimental effect on Mary's current functioning.

Immediately after Michael's birth, Mary was told another pregnancy would be medically risky and was advised to have a tubal ligation. The procedure was done before Mary was discharged with Michael. Soon afterward, Mary began to feel sad, tired and irritable. She was not sleeping or eating well and lost all interest in activities she had always loved. Her relationship with Jim began to suffer, as did her bonding with Michael. Things progressed to a point where Mary became very depressed, her personal hygiene degraded, she began to contemplate suicide and withdrew from everyone in the family. She also experienced a deep sense of guilt about her failure to nurture Michael. After about five weeks of this quickly deteriorating behavior, Jim sat her down and gave her an ultimatum of either voluntarily accepting help or being involuntarily hospitalized. Jim's ultimatum and the fact that she was having suicidal thoughts is what finally convinced her to accept help.

Mary was referred to a female psychiatrist experienced in dealing with postpartum depression. After 12 weeks of talk therapy and a six month course of tricyclic antidepressants, the symptoms slowly went away. Mary has required no further antidepressants subsequently. Since that time, Mary has not experienced any kind of depression remotely as severe. Mary said that her diagnosis was postpartum depression and her treating psychiatrist, Dr. Jane Stone, was still in practice. She volunteered to sign a release of information. A letter was obtained from Dr. Stone.

Dr. Stone's letter confirmed the diagnosis of postpartum depression. Dr. Stone indicated that Mary responded well to treatment, has little chance of a relapse and has good insight. Dr. Stone was also confident Mary would recognize the signs of depression early if it were to occur again and quickly seek treatment. Dr. Stone's statements regarding Mary's positive response to treatment, the absence of any relapse over the past 13 years and Mary's ability to recognize symptoms and seek treatment all suggest a positive prognosis. The chance of a relapse seems unlikely. This worker is confident Mary would take appropriate action if depressive symptoms were to manifest.

JAMES "Jim" NELSON

Jim described his early childhood as being very stable and carefree. Like Mary, Jim's childhood family appeared to have all the elements necessary for healthy and balanced family cohesion and adaptability. There were many indicators to suggest Jim was raised in a stable, loving family that promoted secure, healthy parent/child attachments. These included the strong loving relationship between his parents, the good balance of warmth and control that his parents exercised with all their children, his experience of stability with respect to school, friends and family place of residence, and the close, supportive and loving relationship that all family members still enjoy. Jim was reared in a family that accorded mutual respect and a willingness to grant increasing age-appropriate autonomy. He described his family's lifestyle, values and relationship with his parents and siblings in very positive terms.

While considering Jim's history, six historical issues of concern were identified and explored. These included the deaths of his grandparents, a history of excessive drinking, daily moderate drinking and marijuana use, a difficult adjustment to adulthood, past over-involvement in work and the failure of his first marriage that ended in a bitter divorce. Any relationship between these issues and the degree to which they have been resolved was carefully evaluated. Only two of these issues, the marijuana use and adjustment to adulthood, appear to be related. In this worker's judgment, all but one, Jim's pattern of daily moderate drinking, have been resolved. The following paragraphs contain a discussion that provides the basis for each of these determinations.

During Jim's childhood, all four of his grandparents died of natural causes. Jim was very young when his maternal grandmother and paternal grandfather died and really does not remember them. He was eight years old when his maternal grandfather died and this was a significant loss for him. He saw his grandfather on an almost daily basis and remembers him as being a gentle and kind man. He remembers the funeral and that he cried a lot. He retains fond memories of his grandfather and like Mary this was his first experience with death of a loved one. All indicators would suggest that he grieved in a healthy age-appropriate manner. Jim's paternal grandmother died when he was fourteen. He was not as close to her but remembers how upset his dad was at the time of her death. Again, from all accounts of this experience it appears that the family and Jim grieved these losses in a healthy manner.

Jim's difficulties in making a smooth adjustment to adulthood and his marijuana use apparently began when his family moved to Los Angeles shortly after Jim graduated from high school. This was a very stressful move for Jim in that he had enjoyed the stability of friends, home and school in Oakland all his life. Jim wanted to stay in Oakland but his father had an opportunity for a very significant career advancement in Los Angeles. Jim's father was sensitive to Jim's opinion but ultimately decided that the family would move. Jim's mother was supportive of the move. Jim said that this was the first time that he and his father ever "locked horns". Jim recalls the discussions, arguments and the ultimate move as very stressful. Jim enrolled in community college for a semester and did not do well at all. He also tried to hold down a job at a fast food restaurant while attending school but was let go because he was not reliable in his punctuality and attendance. It was during this time that he began to use marijuana. This did not go over well with his father especially, who by then had become a Los Angeles City Assistant Chief of Police. They had several heated confrontations over the issue. Jim said his solution to the situation was to join the Marines to get away from Los Angeles, get some direction in his life and to have new experiences and adventures. Jim and his father quickly got past the difficulties with the marijuana use and unreliable behavior on Jim's part and have since had a close and supportive relationship. Jim also never used marijuana again after joining the Marines.

Jim reported a history of frequent excessive drinking that occurred during his final two years in the Marines. There were many occasions when he and his buddies "got ripped" during off-duty time while stationed at the United States Embassy in Berlin, Germany. He said that he was not trying to make excuses but beer in Germany is hard to avoid. The drinking never interfered with his ability to carry out his duties. Jim received 2 metitorious service citations while in German and one while in Honduras. After he was honorably discharged as a Sergeant (E-5) and returned home, Jim said he no longer felt inclined to drink to excess and has not done so since.

In addition to the history of excessive drinking, Jim has a history of drinking one or two glasses of wine with dinner, that began when he married Mary and continues to this day. Jim reported that he does not drink alcohol at parties or social occasions because he does not believe in driving even after one or two glasses of wine. Jim also said he would gladly discontinue the wine at dinner if that were an issue that would jeopardize a placement. Based on everything learned about Jim's drinking history and the fact that he has no family predisposition for alcohol abuse it is this worker's opinion that Jim's history of excessive drinking has been resolved. It is also this worker's opinion that in and of itself, Jim's daily moderate drinking is relatively insignificant. However, as was the case with Mary, Jim's history of daily moderate drinking could only be considered resolved if Jim were no longer a daily moderate drinker. That not being the case, the historical pattern of daily moderate drinking according to SAFE protocol is technically an unresolved historical issue of concern, albeit a relatively minor one, primarily because placement in a home where there is any alcohol usage is contraindicated for some children.

Jim characterized his first marriage as a 24-year-old newlywed who quickly became a 25-year-old divorcee. After being honorably discharged, he began working in sales and soon met Betsy, who became his first wife. Betsy was in her first year at USC and she and Jim only dated for two months when they decided to get married. Looking back, Jim said that he was in lust, not in love with Betsy. They argued constantly and Jim quickly realized they were not a good fit. The marriage ended bitterly when Jim discovered Betsy was having affairs. Jim filed for divorce and he and Betsy went their separate ways.

Looking back, Jim believes his marriage with Betsy failed due to their immaturity. Jim believes his first marriage helped prepare him for his marriage to Mary. He was more thoughtful and careful the second time around. Jim also learned to make some behavioral adjustments such as being less self-centered and more patient. He has good insight into how he contributed to the first break-up and what he could have done to end the relationship in a more mature manner. The stability, quality and fifteen year duration of his current marriage would back his contention that he learned his lessons well. The effects of Jim's first marriage do not appear to be having a detrimental effect on his current functioning or relationship with Mary.

While Jim has been very successful in his career, he acknowledged that over the years he tended to become overly involved in his work to the detriment of his home life. Jim said while he enjoys his work it is very competitive and stressful at times. In order to get ahead, you have to put in the hours. Jim is now at a stage where he can achieve a healthier balance between his job and family life and just recently made some significant changes in his work schedule that allows him to spend more time with Mary and the boys.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

MARY NELSON

After careful evaluation of all the factors in this section it is clear that Mary possesses the characteristics of a mature, healthy and responsible adult. Only one relatively minor issue of concern was identified; Mary has a familial predisposition for hypertension. This was discussed with Mary. She is very aware of this issue and takes preventive measures including diet, and regular pressure monitoring. She has not yet had any elevated blood pressure readings and gets regular check ups.

Four exceptional strengths were identified in this section. The first is Mary's problem solving abilities. It is very clear that she is the one family member to turn to when conflicts occur. Mary has a natural ability to bring those in conflict together and mediate a resolution. Mary is also very strong in terms of her acceptance of differences. She is non-judgmental and has an excellent ability to relate to individuals who maintain a different worldview or hold different cultural values. The third exceptional strength has to do with self-esteem. Mary is well grounded and secure with whom she is and maintains a very good attitude towards her life experience. She gains much positive self-regard through her role as wife and mother. Mary uses humor to keep things in perspective and believes this goes a long way in helping her cope with everyday stresses.

JIM NELSON

It is clear that Jim Nelson also possesses the characteristics of a mature, responsible adult even though two issues of concern were identified. One had to do with Jim's moodiness and the second concerned fatigue and insomnia. Overall, Jim has considerable insight into these two issues and is engaged in efforts to change. Two factors, Commitment and Responsibility and Adaptability, were rated as exceptional strengths.

During the first home study interview, Jim self-reported his moodiness and linked it to work stress. He spoke of his tendency to bring work problems home and obsess about them. During these times he was irritable and distant. He is well aware of the implications this behavior could have for a new child placed in the family. To his credit, Jim made great strides in changing this behavior during the course of this home study. He cut down on his work hours and focused on leaving his work issues at the office and enjoying his family. The prognosis for continued improvement in this area appears to be excellent.

At the beginning of the home study, Jim reported physical fatigue and at times, insomnia. He attributed this to long hours of work and a lack of physical exercise. Both Jim and Mary have addressed this issue by consulting with Jim's physician and subsequently joining a local fitness center, which they attend together three times a week. The combination of fewer work hours and increased physical activity has resulted in more energy and better sleep. The family is now looking for more physical activities they can do as a family. Like Mary, Jim also has a familial predisposition for hypertension. He is well versed on this condition and shares in Mary's preventive measures. He gets regular checkups and has never had an elevated blood pressure reading.

In terms of exceptional strengths, the first thing one notices about Jim is he is very bright. He retains a lot of knowledge and has excellent recall. These are obviously great qualities to have in his line of work. Jim is a person that you can count on. When he makes a commitment, he will see it through. He also has a very noticeable sense of humor and an excellent ability to adapt to new challenges. This ability has been a real asset to him in both his professional and personal life.

MARITAL/DOMESTIC PARTNER RELATIONSHIP

The Nelson's 15-year marriage without separation or divorce certainly defines their union as being stable. The only time the relationship was ever threatened was during the time of Mary's postpartum depression. The fact that the relationship survived this very difficult period is testimony to the love Mary and Jim have towards one another. This appears to be a very strong, close and loving relationship. They treat each other with respect

and have an exceptional ability to work out problems. Their ability to provide emotional support to each other was viewed as an exceptional strength. They also displayed outstanding communication skills. They really listen to each other. This relationship has clearly withstood the test of time and challenges of raising a family.

SONS/DAUGHTERS/OTHERS RESIDING OR FREQUENTLY IN THE HOME

Consideration was given to sons Eric and Michael's opinions when Jim and Mary were deciding to submit an application to adopt. It was a decision equally supported by all family members. Both Eric and Michael appear to be secure, well-adjusted, adaptable youths whose physical, social and emotional needs are being well met. Neither boy has a history of conduct that would pose a threat to a new child coming into the family. Eric said that his father talked with both them about physical maturation, sexual development and appropriate expressions of sexual behavior. They are both well versed on the potential impact of having a little sister in the family and the appropriate boundaries that would need to be established. They have an excellent grasp on the realities of having a new child in the home and are both excited about the possibility of having a new sister or brother. In this worker's judgment both boys are well prepared and will make a good adjustment to a placement.

EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

All family members have been advised of Jim and Mary's decision to become a resource family. Positive responses were received and there remains constant interest in the process, requirements, and possibility of the event of placement happening soon. Issues concerning family adaptability and cohesion were carefully explored. Both sides of the family clearly displayed a healthy balance of cohesion and adaptability. Both sides are very inclusive, accepting and ready, willing and able to have active involvement with and support the placement of a new child into the family.

PHYSICAL/SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The Nelson's home is very well maintained and provides plenty of yard space and a fenced-in swimming pool. The furnishings are high quality and child friendly. The family also has a wonderful support system of friends and neighbors who are ready and able to provide emotional and tangible support.

GENERAL PARENTING

Jim and Mary have demonstrated a strong and consistent ability to effectively parent their boys. They have very solid parenting skills and demonstrated exceptional functioning in the areas of child play and parental role. Both are very comfortable and seem to really enjoy parenting and family life. Along with that comes an awareness of the importance of play. Their children have had age-appropriate toys and play experiences. This is a home that frequently echoes with the laughter of their children.

SPECIALIZED PARENTING

Although Jim and Mary are excellent parents, like many applicants they were initially unaware of many of the factors in this section. The concerns regarding these issues predominately reflected a lack of knowledge and/or experience in dealing with these special issues. Jim and Mary were attentive learners in the training group and during all meetings with this social worker. They learned the training material extremely well and the concerns noted initially no longer exist. They really show good understanding of the needs of children in the system and the challenges they will face. During the training group Jim and Mary moved from wanting adoption only to desiring to become a resource family for concurrent planning purposes.

ADOPTION ISSUES

Jim and Mary began their efforts toward adoption with some misconception about current adoption practice especially regarding openness and telling a child about his/her adoption. Their current infertility also merited

consideration as an issue of concern. Again, this couple demonstrated their ability and receptiveness to learning. Participation in the agency training program introduced them to the issues specific to adoption. They were exposed to other points of view and experiences regarding adoption and quickly became well versed on adoption issues. Concerns about their infertility being an unhealthy driving motivation to adopt were quickly dismissed. This couple did not display any of the traits common in couples with unresolved infertility issues and desperation to adopt. They now have an excellent understanding of birth parent issues and the importance of openness in adoption and are committed to play a role in a child's life based on what is best for the child.

PSYCHOSOCIAL EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

The results of this psychosocial evaluation strongly support the notion that Jim and Mary Nelson are ready, willing and able to take on the parenting challenges inherent in foster care and adoption. They have the capacity to establish secure attachments with children as evidenced by their strong attachments with their boys. This ability appears to be rooted in the secure attachments they enjoyed with their own parents. With the exception of one relatively insignificant unresolved historical issue, Jim and Mary appear to be free of any unresolved trauma, loss or victimization experiences that would interfere with their ability to parent. The unresolved issue of concern had to do with Jim and Mary's daily moderate drinking. This issue has implications only for a child for whom placement in a home where alcohol is consumed is contraindicated. In terms of personal characteristics, Jim and Mary clearly possess the characteristics found in mature adults and successful foster/adoptive parents. This is a time tested and strong marital relationship that has all the ingredients necessary for effective parenting. This couple also has an excellent familial support system. Both sides of the family are inclusive and ready to embrace a child as a full family member.

Jim and Mary are equally committed to parenting and competent in this role. Their parenting style with Eric and Michael incorporates a balance of warmth and control. The boys are secure teenagers who are well prepared for the arrival of a new sibling into the family. This worker was extremely impressed with the ability of this couple to grasp the factors contained in the Specialized Parenting and Adoption Issues sections. A strong ability to increase their knowledge and develop skills pertinent to adopting a special needs child was evident throughout the home study process. The couple consistently presented with an ease and eagerness towards learning. Their open and honest manner supported a positive experience and beneficial results. They have good insight and a realization that a healthy family life requires much effort to achieve and even more to maintain. It is this worker's belief that this couple is exceptionally competent to provide a safe, structured, and nurturing home environment for children.

CHILDREN THE FAMILY CAN BEST SERVE

Jim and Mary Nelson would make excellent parents for a child in the age range they are considering (age 5 to 10). They initially applied for a girl between the age of 5 and 10. During the homestudy process the sex of the child became less and less of an issue. They are open to considering a child with a wide range of issues and challenges. Jim and Mary have the skills to parent more than one child but their finances and physical space prevent this from being an option. Jim and Mary are open to and capable of handling a wide range of child needs (see attached SAFE Matching Inventory). I believe this family would do very well with a child that is slow to attach or a child with behavioral problems. A child who is physically active and enjoys soccer would fit right in. A child who needs a lot of attention and nurturing could benefit from Mary being a stay-at-home mom with lots of love to give. Finally, Jim and Mary are not desperate to adopt and are prepared to fully carry out the role of a resource family in terms of facilitating reunification.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that James Nelson and Mary Nelson be approved for Foster Care Placement and Adoption.

Norma Thompson, MSW
Child Welfare Social Worker

Date: 05/24/2005

Additional Attachments
SAFE Questionnaires I and II

Larry K. Mathews, MSW
Child Welfare Supervisor

Date 05/24/2005

RECEIPT OF COPY OF HOME STUDY REPORT

By signing below I acknowledge receiving a copy of this report.

James Nelson

Date: 05/28/2005

Mary Nelson

Date 05/28/2005